

PRESS RELEASE



The Cleveland Museum of Art

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RENOWNED COLLECTION OF OLD MASTER PAINTINGS ON VIEW AT THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART
BEGINNING SEPTEMBER 3

Old Master Paintings from the Collection of Baron Thyssen-Bornemisza,
an exhibition of 57 paintings from one of the world's greatest private art collections, will be on view at The Cleveland Museum of Art from September 3 through October 26, 1980. The paintings, which range in date from the early 14th through the early 19th centuries, include works by such masters as Duccio, Carpaccio, Van Eyck, Cranach, Titian, El Greco, Rubens, Rembrandt, Zurbarán, Canaletto, Boucher, Fragonard, and Goya.

Organized by the International Exhibitions Foundation, Washington, D.C., the exhibition is the first showing in this country of the Thyssen-Bornemisza collection of old master paintings. It will be seen in nine American cities during the next two years.

The collection of Baron Hans Heinrich Thyssen-Bornemisza is housed principally at his 17th-century villa, La Favorita, in Castagnola on Lake Lugano, Switzerland. It is renowned not only for old master paintings but also for modern paintings, medieval sculpture, Oriental carpets, and magnificent decorative objects, including one of the Kingston Tureens, a pair of rococo silver tureens designed by Juste Aurèle Meissonnier, silversmith to Louis XV of France, purchased jointly with The Cleveland Museum of Art in 1977.

The collection was begun by the present Baron's father, also Hans Heinrich, second son of the German industrialist August Thyssen, founder of the Thyssen

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steel, mining, manufacturing, and banking empire. The elder Hans Heinrich--who became Baron Thyssen-Bornemisza following his marriage to a Hungarian aristocrat--purchased the Villa Favorita in 1933 and built an adjoining museum to house a collection rich in early German and Flemish painting.

When he died in 1947, his paintings were divided among his four children. Feeling that the collection should remain intact as a memorial to his father, the present Baron began buying back the dispersed paintings, at the same time acquiring works of his own choice.

Adding to his father's modest collection of works from Italy, he assembled a group of more than 80 Italian paintings, now the richest part of the collection. Seventeen of these are in the exhibition. The earliest, and one of the finest, is a panel painting which was once on the high altar of the Cathedral of Siena--Christ and the Woman of Samaria, executed in 1311 by the Sienese master Duccio di Buoninsegna. Another masterpiece is Vittore Carpaccio's Young Knight in a Landscape (Francesco Maria della Rovere, Duke of Urbino), dated 1510. It is one of the first life-size, full-length portraits in European painting and one of Carpaccio's greatest works. A panel painting depicting Saint Catherine before Pope Gregory XI at Avignon, from an altarpiece by the 15th-century Sienese master Giovanni di Paolo, should be of special interest to Cleveland Museum visitors since this museum owns two other panels from this altarpiece.

The Baron's collection of more than 70 German paintings, largely acquired by his father, are unrivaled in any private collection and very few museums. Eight of these works are in the exhibition, notably the beautiful Madonna with the Bunch of Grapes by Lucas Cranach the Elder, and superbly painted portraits by Albrecht Altdorfer and Hans Baldung Grien, all dating from the early 16th century.

3-old master paintings

The Thyssen-Bornemisza collection is also rich in Netherlandish and Flemish paintings, of which nine will be shown here. A particularly rare work is Jan van Eyck's The Annunciation, a two-panel painting, datable to about 1436, in which the figures are painted in grays to simulate sculpture. Also rare is the small, jewel-like Our Lady of the Barren Tree, one of the few surviving works of the 15th-century master Petrus Christus, a follower of van Eyck. Noteworthy, too, is the late 15th-century Portrait of a Young Man by Hans Memling, which has a fine still life with a vase of flowers painted on the reverse.

Among eleven 17th-century Dutch paintings in the exhibition are Rembrandt's brilliant Portrait of a Man and Jan Steen's playful self-portrait. There are meticulously painted still lifes by Willem Claesz Heda, Jan Davidsz de Heem, and Willem Kalf, and beautiful landscapes and seascapes by such artists as Jacob van Ruisdael and Jan van de Cappelle.

Although fewer in number, the Spanish and French paintings are unusually fine. Of exceptional interest are two versions of The Annunciation by El Greco, one done around 1572-76, the other about 1600, illustrating the change in his style from the monumental solidity of his early Italian period to the flamelike designs which characterized his later work in Spain. Also deserving of special mention are a richly colored Saint Agnes by the 17th-century master Francisco de Zurbarán and two portraits by Francisco Goya, one painted about 1798, the other around 1820. The French paintings in the exhibition include lighthearted and somewhat idyllic depictions of 18th-century society by François Boucher, Jean-Honoré Fragonard, and Antoine Watteau.

The fully illustrated catalog for the exhibition contains an introduction by John Walker, director emeritus of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, and entries on each painting by Allen Rosenbaum, director and curator of paintings at the Princeton University Art Museum. It is available for \$10.00 at the Museum Sales Desk.

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4-old master paintings

The exhibition is supported by a Federal indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities and by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts (a Federal agency), United Technologies Corporation, the Government of the Canton of Ticino, Switzerland, and the Tourist Office of Ticino. The Cleveland showing is assisted by a grant from the Ohio Arts Council and an additional grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Gallery talks on the exhibition are scheduled at 1:30 p.m. daily from September 3 through 9, with a special talk for the hearing impaired at 1:30 p.m. on October 7.

Ann T. Lurie, curator of paintings at the Cleveland Museum, will discuss the Thyssen-Bornemisza collection in a series of three Wednesday evening lectures beginning October 1 at 8:00 p.m. Marvin Eisenberg, professor of art history at the University of Michigan, will speak on Sienese altarpiece paintings, particularly those in the Thyssen-Bornemisza and Cleveland Museum collections, on Sunday, October 12, at 3:30 p.m.

On four Wednesdays in September, at 12:30 and 7:00 p.m., films on artists represented in the exhibition will be shown in the Museum's Recital Hall.

Scheduled are:

September 3	In Search of Rembrandt. 28 minutes.
September 10	Venice, Theme and Variations. 30 minutes.
September 17	Rubens. 26 minutes.
September 24	Francisco Goya. 26 minutes.

For additional information or photographs, please contact the Public Relations Office, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Blvd., Cleveland, Ohio 44106. Phone 216/421-7340.